

## COVID-19: Basic Duty of Care checks for the recruitment and management of staff in aid organisations

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Globally, we are facing an unprecedented pandemic which requires a specific business continuity plan and response from all organisations. The threat of a pandemic of this nature requires organisations to look at duty of care using different perspectives; ones they may not have used before:

Perspective	
Individual	Personal health risk, nationality, accommodation facilities, national or non-national (expat)
Role	essential duties, safety and security
Organisation	Business continuity plan in location, travel insurance, medical policies, IT infrastructure, communication, informed consent
National	Quality of in-country medical systems and capability

*Table 1*

### Key areas for your business continuity planning

- The sources of information you are using to guide your planning (WHO, local Government, HQ's government)
- Who is leading your organisation's planning and response, and how are they doing this?
- The capability and quality of medical services in the countries you are working
- The different health risks and concerns individuals face - see individual perspectives in table 1
- Great internal communication
- Trusted channel for staff to raise concerns
- Business continuity plans for each of your offices/locations including preparing staff to work from home
- Conducting risk assessments and adjusting your risk level criteria and local security plans to take into account the impact of COVID-19 in each location
- Ensuring your staff support mechanisms include support for concerns on COVID-19 e.g. counselling services and other mental health support services.

The approach to how you recruit and manage staff must be integrated with the organisation's business continuity planning

### Recruiting staff

- Have you risk assessed the role and the individual (together) based on their vulnerability to COVID-19 and access to appropriate medical support?
- How will you adapt your recruitment strategy - will you adapt to recruiting essential roles only, no accompanied posts?
- Will you recruit national staff as much as possible? Consider additional specialist remote support for in-country staff.
- What medical support are all staff (national and non-national) likely to receive in each location?

### Managing staff

- Support each location in producing a business continuity plan. These plans should provide indicators for staff health, movement, accommodation and support as well as the affects the threat has to programme activities.
- Support managers and enable them to make good local decisions
- Provide access to mental health services including counselling services – locally, if possible, and on-line
- Continually prepare the individual for the risks in the role - the risks associated with the role should be outlined and an acceptance of this understanding gained from each individual (informed consent). This must include the risk from COVID-19 e.g. ensuring staff know what to do should there be a change in government mandate, infection in the team, self-isolation etc.
- Give staff the protection and equipment required to keep them as safe as possible whilst working
- Ensure staff have the opportunity to opt out of activities if they feel unsafe. Provide regular updates on what the organisation is doing and what that means for them.
- Continue to check your insurance policies as things evolve in each location/country
- Consider the timing for expatriating home the non-nationals most at-risk
- With your insurance provider, consider how you will evacuate staff to a country with good medical care and support, before staff get sick.

Contact Christine Williamson on [christine@dutyofcareinternational](mailto:christine@dutyofcareinternational) for advice on your duty of care responsibilities

Thank you